



# New England Agricultural Statistics Service

a field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service  
United States Department of Agriculture

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## Maine Potatoes Dug to Measure Yield, Size, and Grade

The 2001 Maine potato crop weighed in at approximately 16.1 million hundred weight (cwt.). With 62,000 acres harvested in 2001, the average yield was 260 cwt. Now that the 2002 crop is planted, the U.S. Department of Agriculture begins to forecast potato production for the upcoming year. An important measure of production is the annual Potato Objective Yield Survey conducted in seven major potato-producing states across the country. In Maine, the study is administered by the New England field office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

The information collected is used to establish official USDA statistics of fall potato harvested acreage and production for the 2002 crop. Another important use of the data is to generate a **Size and Grade** report that summarizes the crop by variety, tubers per hill, hills per acre, sizes of tubers and grade (US Number 1, 2, and culls).

In Maine, local interviewers will be contacting about 140 farmers to gather information on 210 potato fields across the state. Farmers selected for this study will be notified by letter asking for their help in this important project. The cooperation of potato farmers is needed to ensure that the Maine crop is accurately represented in national potato production statistics.

Since the objective yield survey is designed to measure production, enumerator visits are timed as close to harvest as possible. Interviewers contact farmers before harvest to collect preliminary information and request permission to harvest three hills from each of two randomly selected plots in each sample field. Potatoes taken from the plots will be sent to the lab for count, grade, size, and weight measurements. After harvest, a few of the sampled fields will be re-visited to measure harvest losses. As with all surveys conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, individual operator information is kept strictly confidential and is exempt from requests under the Freedom of Information Act. Individual reports are only used in combination with other reports to establish state and national statistics.

The first national production forecast will be printed in the **Crop Production** report from Washington, D.C. on November 12, 2002, and the final forecast will be published on December 10, 2002; both reports will be released at 8:30 a.m. All reports are available on the Internet within minutes of the scheduled release time. A brief summary of Maine statistics will be reprinted in the November and December issues of the **Ag Review** (a monthly newsletter from the Concord field office). The **Maine Potato Size and Grade Report** will be published in early January.

[The New England Agricultural Statistics Service is a field office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. Located in Concord, New Hampshire, it is responsible for agricultural statistics in all six states in the region. The office can be reached at 800-642-9571 or through e-mail at [nass-nh@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass-nh@nass.usda.gov). All national statistics and state level newsletters are available free e-mail subscriptions and on the Internet at <http://www.usda.gov/nass/>.]

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